



# MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

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February 24, 2014

The Honorable Anne Healey, Chairperson  
Members of the House Rules & Executive Nominations Committee  
Room 145, House Office Building  
6 Bladen St.  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**Re: Letter of Information, *House Joint Resolution 6 – Conowingo Dam – Sediment – Dredging***

Dear Chairperson Healey and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) has reviewed the House Joint Resolution 6 (HJ 6) entitled *Conowingo Dam – Sediment – Dredging*, and would like to provide the committee with information regarding to this Resolution.

The intent of the proposed resolution is to urge the United States Congress to authorize and fully fund a project by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to dredge sediment behind the Conowingo Dam in order to preserve the dam's capability to block pollutants in the Susquehanna River from reaching the Chesapeake Bay. Currently, several activities are occurring at both the State and Federal levels to determine both the water quality impacts associated with sediments behind Conowingo Dam, as well as the most cost-effective strategies for managing those sediments.

One such activity is a study, the Lower Susquehanna River Watershed Assessment (LSRWA), which is a joint project between the State of Maryland and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The goal of LSRWA is to quantify sediments and associated nutrients coming into Chesapeake Bay from both the watershed and the four hydroelectric dams on the lower Susquehanna River during high flow storm events and determine their impacts on Bay water quality. The preliminary results of this study confirm that the current conditions in Conowingo Reservoir, assuming full Chesapeake Bay TMDL implementation, would result in a water quality impairment in three segments which are the mainstem of Chesapeake Bay, the Chester River and Eastern Bay. The impairments are determined to be a result of the nutrients associated with the sediment and not the sediments alone. The study also evaluates the cost-effectiveness of solutions to manage the sediment and the nutrients associated with those sediments (e.g., dredging, upgrading upstream wastewater treatment plants or other nutrient specific controls). Additional data and information needs have been identified and will be necessary to better quantify the nutrient water quality impact associated with Conowingo sediments and inform appropriate management actions.



The Honorable Anne Healey

Page 2

In addition, the State is currently negotiating with Exelon on the relicensing of Conowingo Dam. A more complete understanding of any water quality impacts of sediments behind Conowingo Dam will also be necessary for the State to issue a water quality certification for this project. The data gaps and monitoring needs identified through the LSRWA study are factoring into this water quality determination and will need to be further addressed before a license can be issued. Until all of these details are resolved it will be difficult to determine the best management alternative.

Thank you for your consideration of this information. We will continue to monitor HJ 6 during the Committee's deliberations, and I am available to answer any questions you may have. Please contact me at 410-260-6301 or [jeffrey.fretwell@maryland.gov](mailto:jeffrey.fretwell@maryland.gov) if you would like to discuss any of these issues further.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey Fretwell

cc: Lee Currey, Director, Science Services Administration

